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FORGET ME NOT

611
1574

VERSES.

BY

FREDERIC SHOBERL.

" ..... Forget Me Not, in short, is a desire implanted by the God of Nature in the human breast, and, if I mistake not, of kindred origin to that 'longing after Immortality,' which is the parent of the sublimest virtues, of the highest and holiest emotions."

From the Preface to "Forget Me Not," for 1844.

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PREFACE.

The following metrical compositions owed their origin to my connexion with the first of the Annuals, Forget Me Not, which was under my superintendence, as Editor, from its commencement to its close, and in which they were at various times inserted. Their poetical worth it is not for me to appreciate; but sure I am that among right-minded readers there can be but one opinion respecting the spirit that breathes in these effusions.

A word in relation to the first of them may not be superfluous. In the year 1825, at the time when the volume for the following year was very nearly completed at press, Mr. Ackermann, the Publisher, felt disappointed in not receiving contributions promised by Mr. Henry Neele, whose name he was desirous of including in the list of our literary assistants. Application being made by letter to Mr. Neele, he excused himself on the plea of severe illness, and sent the STANZAS placed at the head of my little collection.

These I should have rejected without hesitation, as inculcating downright materialism—a doctrine utterly irreconcilable with my own most cheering hopes and deepest convictions. Finding, however, that this course would displease, I had no alternative but to send forth with the STANZAS as strong a protest as possible against a creed which tends, according to my view, to stifle every virtuous principle, and to extinguish all the highest and holiest aspirations of our nature. Such were the motives which led to the production of the first of my pieces entitled REMONSTRANCE.

The preceding explanation seemed necessary, in order to account for the introduction of the obnoxious STANZAS both in the volume of Forget Me Not and in these pages.

Other circumstances have since occurred to render the STANZAS to which Henry Neele affixed his name rather remarkable to me.

Having occasion, many years ago, to refer to a small volume of one of our older poets, (whose name I cannot recollect) printed in the first half of the 17th century, and quoted by Chateaubriand in his History of English Literature, I was surprised to stumble upon a piece of which Neele's STANZAS appeared to be a transcript—I say *appeared*—for I had not oppor-

tunity to compare the two. Far be it from me, without due investigation, to charge Mr. Neele with plagiarism; but I was certainly much struck with the resemblance.

Since then, among Cowper's translations, I have met with one professedly made from a Latin poem by Dr. Jortin. This, in order to show the family likeness, in the spirit, if not in the diction, I transcribe from the Rev. T. S. Grimshawe's edition of Cowper's Works (vol. viii., p. 423).

Suns that set, and moons that wane,
Rise, and are restored again;
Stars, that orient day subdues,
Night, at her return, renews;
Herbs and flowers, the beauteous birth
Of the genial womb of earth,
Suffer but a transient death
From the Winter's cruel breath;
Zephyr speaks, serener skies
Warm the glebe, and they arise.
We, alas! Earth's haughty kings,
We that promise mighty things,
Losing soon Life's happy prime,
Droop and fade in little time.
Spring returns, but not our bloom;
Still 'tis Winter in the tomb.

January, 1784.

If Cowper pleased himself in this translation, I am certain that no scholar would be satisfied with so

slovenly a performance. Who could expect for instance to find

nec nos ordo revolubilis auras
Reddit in æthereas, tumuli neque claustra resolvit—

dismissed in the last English line!

The only conclusion that I am disposed to draw from the circumstances here detailed is this—that Dr. Jortin took for his original those lines of the Poet of the seventeenth century to which I have adverted; Cowper's being avowedly a translation of Jortin's Latin version: and that Neele, probably acquainted with the performance of that older poet as well as Cowper's, and, penetrated with the spirit of both, when he sat down to write upon the subject, fell into the same strain of thought, and unconsciously clothed it in nearly the same language as his predecessors.

Every friend of his kind must join in reprobating and combating materialist notions, as manifestly tending to encourage self-destruction. The lamentable end of poor Neele is too well known to need being cited in evidence.

FORGET ME NOT

VERSES.

STANZAS.

Suns will set, and moons will wane,
Yet they rise, and wax again;
Trees, that Winter's storms subdue,
Their leafy livery renew;
Ebb and flow is Ocean's lot;
But Man lies down and rises not:
Heaven and Earth shall pass away,
Ere shall wake his slumbering clay.

Vessels but to havens steer;
Paths denote a resting near;
Rivers flow into the main;
Icefalls rest upon the plain;

The final end of all is known: —
Man to darkness goes alone:
Cloud, and doubt, and mystery,
Hide his future destiny.

Nile, whose waves their bound'ries burst,
Slakes the torrid desert's thirst;
Dew, descending on the hills,
Life in Nature's veins instils;
Show'rs, that on the parch'd meads fall,
Their faded loveliness recall:
Man alone sheds tears of pain —
Weeps—but ever weeps in vain! —

HENRY NEELE.

REMONSTRANCE.

ADDRESSED TO THE WRITER OF THE PRECEDING STANZAS.

Christian Minstrel, sing'st thou so? —
Is Man born but to grief and woe? —
Doth he alone shed tears of pain,
Weep, and ever weep in vain?
Hid is his future destiny
In cloud, and doubt, and mystery?

Far better, then, indeed, had Man
Perish'd ere his brief race began;
Better he ne'er had seen the day,
Nor felt the sun's enlivening ray,

Nor learnt the charms divine to trace
That bloom on Nature's lovely face!

But can it be?—And when this clay
Or soon or later must decay,
Shall Reason's torch, shall Genius' fire,
Love, Friendship, Charity, expire?
Shall all those high imaginings
Which lift us far o'er earthly things —
Those lofty hopes, which seek the skies —
That Mind, which through Creation flies;
Plunges to Ocean's depths—explores,
With daring ken, Earth's hidden stores —
Which scales the heavens, and measures there
The glorious planets' vast career —
And, bounding on through realms untrod
By mortal foot, ascends to God —
These—shall these perish?—Wherefore, then,
Minstrel, were they given to men?

What though the body sink to rest,
Like weary babe on nurse's breast,
And to its kindred dust return,
There lives a spark which still shall burn.
Nor can this spark, howe'er defin'd,
Psyche or spirit, soul or mind,
Offspring of an Eternal Sire,
Like things of grovelling dust expire!

Then, Christian Minstrel, sing not so;
Man is not born to gloom and woe:

Sure as he lies down he shall rise,
And gain his proper home—the skies;
And though he here shed tears of pain,
He shall not ever weep in vain.
Assured of Virtue's endless meed,
He walks the path by Heaven decreed,
Cheer'd by his glorious destiny —
Life, Light, and Immortality.

'Tis not Religion's Voice alone
Which makes this joyful doctrine known;
But Reason, too, proclaims that Man,
When he has run his earthly span,
And left his mortal dross behind,
Shall, in a higher sphere refined,
Perfect those energies divine
Which through his humbler nature shine.

Then, Minstrel, tune thy Lyre again;
Sound a more sweet and soothing strain;
Let thy melodious numbers wake
Hopes that no doubt may ever shake;
Teach that the ills which here assail
'Gainst Virtue's pow'r shall nought avail;
That, this brief state of trial o'er,
Sorrow and pain annoy no more;
And Man—not a mere breathing clod —
Man lives for ever, like his God!

THE MATRIMONIAL RULE.

INSCRIBED IN THE ALBUM OF A YOUNG LADY ON THE EVE OF MARRIAGE.

'Tis morning—o'er the new-waked earth
The sun his brightest radiance flings,
And nought is heard save sounds of mirth,
And all around with gladness rings.

Anon, light clouds begin to rise,
While eddying breezes sweep along;
Dark and more dark they veil the skies,
And storm-winds drown the voice of Song.

So, lady, do we often see
The morn of matrimonial life
All smiles, all joy, all gaiety,
Its noon obscured by feuds and strife.

But would you know a charm of power
To assure the sunshine of the heart,
To break the tempests that will lower,
To blunt the point of Discord's dart—

Bear and Forbear—no wiser given
Than this short rule, which, practised well,
Makes marriage even on earth a heaven,
Neglected, turns it to a hell.

THE WISH.

'Tis sweet along the pebbled shore
The solitary path to trace,
To list the billows' endless roar,
To witness their eternal chase.

'Tis sweet—how sweet!—at dewy eve
'Neath jessamine and woodbine bow'rs,
Where Fancy loves fair scenes to weave,
To muse away the moonlight hours.

But sweeter far to gaze, I ween,
On Woman's soul-illumin'd eye,
When heavenly thoughts light up her mien
With more than earthly ecstasy;

To watch the gems of pity start,
And on that eye's soft fringes hang,
Mute language of the tender heart,
Pure as the fount from which they sprang;

To drink with greedy ear the stream
Of music from her witching voice,
That melts the soul to Sorrow's theme,
Or bids its every nerve rejoice;

To find in pain, in weal, in woe,
A pillow on the one-loved breast:
Let me, kind Fate, such transport know —
Take wealth, and fame, and all the rest.

WHERE IS GOD?

Where is He?—Ask His emblem,
The glorious—glorious sun,
Who glads the round world with his beams,
Ere his day's long course is run.
Where is He?—Ask the stars that keep
Their nightly watch on high.
Where is He?—Ask the pearly dews,
The tear-drops of the sky.

Where is He?—Ask the secret founts
Which feed the boundless deep;
The dire simoom, the soft night-breeze,
That lulls the earth to sleep.
Where is He?—Ask the storm of fire
Which bursts from Etna's womb,
And ask the glowing lava-flood,
That makes the land a tomb.

Where is He?—Ask the Maelstrom's whirl,
Shivering tall pines, like glass;
Ask the giant oak, the graceful flower,
Or the simplest blade of grass.

Where is He?—Ask Behemoth,
Who drinketh rivers dry;
The ocean-king Leviathan,
Or the scarce-seen atom fly.

Where is He?—Ask the awful calm
On mountain-tops that rests,
And the bounding, thund'ring avalanche,
Rent from their rugged crests;
Ask the wide-wasting hurricane,
Careering in its might;
The thunder-crash, the lightning-blaze,
Earth all convulsed with fright.

Where is He?—Ask the crystal isles
On arctic seas that sail;
Or ask, from lands of balm and spice,
The perfume-breathing gale,
Where in the universe is found
That Presence-favour'd spot—
All—all—proclaim His dwelling-place—
But say—WHERE IS HE NOT?

THE PROPHET.

WRITTEN TO ACCOMPANY AN ENGRAVING IN THE JUVENILE FORGET ME NOT FOR 1830.

In by-gone times—my unlearned pen
Can't specify precisely when —
There lived a Seer; remote from all
The cares that social life enthrall,
He mark'd the seasons and their changes —
Mark'd where the eccentric comet ranges:
He knew the planets' courses too;
Knew every herb and flower that grew;
And all their virtues could apply
To form the sovereign remedy.

He had, moreover, a deep knowledge —
Not taught at school, nor even at college —
Of that perverse, capricious thing,
The human heart, at once the spring
Of good and ill; and could right well
Alike your thoughts and fortunes tell.
So all the country said—and you
Have heard what all say must be true —
Hence, though you may be doubtful of it,
They named him nothing but "The Prophet."

Not yet had fifty winters shed
Their hoary influence o'er his head:
Age had not robb'd his cheek's rich dye,
Nor dimm'd the lustre of his eye,
Nor furrow'd his majestic face,
Although an antique air and grace
His curling beard and ample dress
Join'd on his figure to impress;
While in his life a pattern he
Display'd of pure philanthropy.
A loose robe wrapp'd his manly form
Alike from sunshine and from storm;
And in a sweet embower'd nook,
On the green bank of murmuring brook,
Near verge of ever-changing sea —
The picture of Inconstancy —
In hermitage of ivied stone,
The stately Prophet dwelt alone.

When heaven, and earth, and deep, were calm,
And evening breezes shed their balm,
On rocky cliff he lov'd to stray,
And linger till the close of day.
There would he gaze, with stedfast look,
On Nature's fair expanded book:
Or oft with studious eye explore
Tomes penn'd by learned wights of yore;
And wisdom glean from both, until
He seem'd a living oracle.

Here, while he mused, the maidens gay
From country round would bend their way,
And to the Prophet's lore apply
To learn their future destiny.
Then would he take the inquirer's hand,
And, as he spoke with accents bland,
Humouring their fancies, seek the while
To blend instruction with his style;
Intent they eyed the godlike man,
As in such strain his lesson ran:—

"Fair child, behold yon placid sea,
The image of a mind at rest,
Enjoying, from wild passions free,
The tranquil sunshine of the breast.

"But ah! how soon the gathering storm
May wreak its rage, and change the scene;
The polished mirror may deform
And leave no trace of what hath been.

"So farewell to thy bosom's peace,
If once to sin thou yield'st thy heart:
Too sure thy happiness must cease
When thou and innocence shall part.

"Whatever chance may thee betide,
Whate'er affliction thee befall,
With Virtue for thy friend and guide,
Contented thou may'st bear it all.

"Then guard, sweet damsel, guard with care
Against the approach of vice and sin;
And let thy youthful heart beware —
Our direst foes oft lurk within.

"Beware of pride and vain desires,
The lust of wealth and worldly joy;
Beware of Love's unhallowed fires,
Which light, which burn, but to destroy.

"Frail is our strength—the struggle hard —
But place thy confidence in Heaven;
Thy firmness it will sure reward —
Its aid will at thy pray'r be given."

THE SEARCH AFTER GOD.[1]

Can'st thou, by searching, find out God?
Job, xi., 7.

Thee seeks my spirit,
Thee, Father of Spirits, Thee, the Uncreate,
Round whose eternal throne, in boundless space,
Blaze myriad suns in gorgeous majesty,
Whom Earth's revolving ages trembling guess'd at,
Had named, but knew not,
Thee, Thee, I seek!

Thee, Thee, I seek! —
Why hidest thou Thy face? —
Was it not Thou whose fiat bade me be?
Could I call forth my being ere I was?
Mere emanation of Thy living light,
Most marvellously enwrapt in earthly mould —
Father of all things, Thou, too, art my sire:
Thy offspring calls Thee—calls and knows Thee not:
Why dost Thou hide Thee from my longing eyes?

[1] From the German of Heinrich Zschokke, a distinguished German writer, the collection of whose avowed productions extends to forty volumes. He is also the reputed author of *Stunden der Andacht* (Hours of Devotion), in eight volumes octavo, the very numerous editions of which work attest its extraordinary popularity.

Thee have I sought;
Upborne on Pray'rs strong pinions have I soar'd:
The while this frame sank prostrate in the dust,
Its mortal eyes bedimm'd with tears of Love,
Through the etherial dome my spirit ranged,
And, in its anxious course from world to world,
Sought Thee, and cried—the worlds gave back the cry —
"Sire of the Universe, reveal Thyself!"
Infinity in silence heard the call;
Earth, planets, suns, held on their wonted course —
The course prescribed from deep Eternity:
And, shuddering, loving, weeping, I awoke,
From the fond dream of faith.
The voice of Nature thunder'd in mine ear,
But Thy parental voice—I heard it not:
I saw but traces of Thy power, not Thee!

Thee, Thee I sought,
Whom all the tongues of all the Spirits praise.
I listen'd to the words of Saint and Sage;
And Priests, and Bonzes, Lamas, and Imāns,
Loudly proclaim'd Thy glory.
Proclaimed *Thy* glory?
No, holy Sire of all the things that be,
Not Thee, themselves their blinded hearts proclaim'd.
Not to Thy glory bigots whet the sword —
Not to Thy glory build they scaffolds up —
Not to Thy glory, though in Thy blest name,
Hurls the proud Pontiff his anathemas.
Fired by the lust of power, not love of Thee,

They prey, more cruel than the ravening beasts
That roam the Afric deserts, on their kind.

Thee I have sought,
Thou Omnipresent, Unrevealed One!
Arm'd with the torch of Science, have explor'd
Nature's most secret chambers. I have seen
The stream of Life pour its unmeasured tide
Through Animal and Vegetation's tribes;
I've seen in the acid drop a populous sea,
And in a leaf a town of busy beings;
I've seen the crystal into vapour melt,
And torrents gush from airs invisible;
The electric power, with wondrous influence,
Pervade all Nature; in the magnet draw,
Repel in the torpedo; glance like wings
Of fire around the pole; and glad the Earth
With blessings shed from the riven thunder-cloud.

At last I stood alone—and shudd'ring stood —
Upon the verge of Nature, on her shores
Of matter crude, inert, inanimate,
Where break the ever-restless waves of life,
Forming and decomposing. There I cried:
O God!—my God!—where art Thou?
Is then this ceaseless strife 'twixt life and death —
Each in its turn absorbing and absorbed —
Is this Creation's Uncreated Cause?
If it be so, then is one lightning thought,
Forth flashing from my mind, far more divine
Than this blind working of the elements.

I float above their fathomless abyss,
Self-conscious over the unconscious waste,
A brilliant light o'er brooding darkness hung,
A free volition over will-less matter.
Who saith Almighty Power is present here?
Where is His bounty?—where His wisdom?—where
His loving kindness?—where His holiness?
He who the ear hath planted, shall not He,
Too, hear?—He who the wonders of the eye
Contrived, shall He not see?—He who hath taught
The Spirits knowledge, ah! shall he not know?
Him, the Life-giver, have I eager sought,
And found but life—Him, the All-wise, I sought,
And found but wisdom—Him, the Bountiful,
And found but love.

Thee have I sought. I ask'd in the high heavens,
Where Sirius and Orion dimly shine,
Where their eternal round about the pole
Cassiopeia and Boötes dance,
Where, through the Moon's phosphor-bright plains, the streams
Of burning lava from her mountains flow—
No sound responded thence. And I beheld
The snow-white axis of great Jupiter;
And, circled by his golden ring, explor'd
Far Saturn and the farther Uranus.
I mounted to the Sun's resplendent orb,
Onward from star to star, and, onward still,
To where no stars shine more—where a faint gleam
Steals through the darkling void of the Infinite,

From suns which human eye have never lit;
And in my anxious search for Thee I saw
The Inscrutable—there traced Thy Providence —
My Father's everlasting mansion found,
But saw not Thee.

Down from the immeasurable heights of heaven
I shrank again to my familiar dust:
I wept, and cried aloud:—"He who hath framed
The wondrous fabric of the Universe —
He who bestoweth unimagined joys
On myriad tribes which crowd its every nook —
Needs He a worm like me?
Yet hath He given me in His house a place,
And who am I that He remembereth me?
Yet me He doth remember."

Anon, all generations of the Earth,
Since its creation, pass'd before my sight
And disappear'd: the tyrant's transient rule
Over his fettered millions I beheld —
Beheld the nations' mad and bloody wars,
For glory, wealth, and power, Ambition's aims,
Nay, for the airy shadow of a dream.
Alas! Man's history is but a web
Of Frenzy's joys and sorrows. The Most Holy
Upon the cross yielded his innocent life,
While Guilt has led to laurell'd victory;
Yet from each folly's grave hath wisdom sprung.
As from the sullen mineral the flame,
Transforming darkness into light, ascends

And heavenward aspires, so, too, aspires,
So, too, ascends from perishable dust
The spirit to the Imperishable Source.
Humanity, what contrasts meet in Thee,
Thy feet yet plunged i' th' depths of ancient Night,
Thy brow all radiant with the light of God!
In vain hath happiness supreme been sought
In gold or power, in pleasure or in fame:
The highest knowledge of the wise at last
Is to be undeceived———I'm undeceived —
In dust I sought God, and I found but dust!
And all these thrones, worlds, suns—what are they?
—dust!
No kindred the Immortal Spirit owns,
But to the Father of immortal things.

I shall be His,
When this frail body hath gone down to dust;
I shall be His,
When e'en the solid globe itself dissolves,
When the Sun's splendour long hath been extinct,
Still shall the Godhead's glorious light shine on,
And of that light a feeble spark be mine!

No, not in dust—'tis in the Spirit alone
The glory of its Maker is revealed.—
I am in Him!—in me, through me, He speaks.
Who, if not He himself, taught Man his name?—
Who gave him knowledge of the Invisible?—
Who turn'd his face toward heaven!—Who placed
within

A judge of all his actions?—Who instructs
Frail mortals to adjust the strife between
Passion and duty by far other rules
Than those which pleasure dictates?—Whence, too, is it
That, for an unseen, spiritual good
We cheerfully forego the joys of life?—
Dust draws to dust, the spirit to the spirit—
To Thee, Most Holy One, who through Thyself
Revealed art in Man.

No more I seek Thee;
No more in dust I seek the living God;
Thy universe is my abiding place;
And thine Eternity—it is my time.
Existence is but one eternity,
Life but a step to everlasting bliss.

O joy transcending every earthly joy!
O rapture inexpressible, to know
My destin'd lot!—*Because God is, I am!*
God lives for ever!—therefore I shall live!
God dwells in bliss!—bliss, therefore, shall be mine!
To Him be adoration, praise, and love!

THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDS.

A FRAGMENT.

Careering o'er the stormy deep,
Whose mountain billows never sleep,
Near bleak Fuego's rock-bound shores,
Where the eternal tempest roars;
When first the gallant seamen sped,
Death's terrors o'er their track were spread,
And land, and surge, and sky, seem'd blent
In one unearthly element.

Strain they every nerve, and now
Northward turn their daring prow
To milder climes, where softer gales
Gently impel their shatter'd sails
To that vast Deep, whose waters roll
From either India to the pole,
O'er which perennial Summer smiles —
Ocean of ten thousand isles!

Ah! what fairy visions then
Burst upon those toil-worn men:
Lands of soft airs and sunny skies;
And fruits and flowers of beauteous dies;
And smiling dales, and wood-crown'd hills,
All sparkling with transparent rills;

And graceful forms, with flowing hair,
And arms and swelling bosoms bare,
And dark eyes, flashing bright as gems
In eastern monarchs' diadems;
While wreaths of fragrant flowers embraced
The polish'd brow and taper waist —
Forms such as Fable placed of yore
In Pleasure's bowers on Paphos' shore,
Or glad the faithful Moslem's eyes
In his kind Prophet's paradise.

See, with voluptuous dance and song,
These luscious forms their sports prolong
Under the deep o'erarching shade
By towering palms and toas made,
And beneath these, with arms outspread,
The tree which yields their daily bread.

But, hark! what shriek of agony
Pierces the merry minstrelsy! —
The fatal stroke has just been sped
On the yet writhing victim's head;
And see with reeking brains and gore
The flowery greensward sprinkled o'er! —
Why is the victim doomed to bleed?
Dark Superstition prompts the deed.
The Savage owns its potent sway;
His gods, and, still more fierce than they,
His priests, the sacrifice command,
And scatter death throughout the land.

Another scream of wild despair,
Of frantic anguish, fills the air! —
See yon young Mother, like the deer
Bounding away when hounds are near;
While closely to her panting breast
The first-born of her love is prest;
But vain her fleetness, vain her fears,
Her struggles vain, and vain her tears;
Vain her resistance to the last —
The noose around its neck is cast —
One gurgling cry, one quivering thrill,
One frenzied shriek—and all is still!

Vain are the gifts which Nature pours
With lavish hand on favour'd shores;
The Savage, with uncultur'd mind,
Will play the tyrant with his kind,
And, cruel, on his gods confer
The self-same hideous character;
Till e'en the Eden where he's placed
He makes a blood-stained, howling waste.

THE

PATRIOT FATHER;

AN HISTORICAL PLAY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

FREELY TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

OF

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE

BY

FREDERIC SHOBERL.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

1850.

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PREFACE.

When I first decided on printing the following Play, I had no intention of announcing either the name of the Author, or of acknowledging my own share in the performance. My motives for this meditated suppression originated partly in the invectives which have been so lavishly bestowed upon Kotzebue; because the principal interest, in one or two of the Plays by which his talents as a dramatist are well known in this country, is excited in favour of characters who have been guilty of deviations from the paths of virtue and honour.

This charge of painting Vice in amiable colours, chiefly founded on the Dramas above alluded to, and also advanced against Schiller's popular Play of *The Robbers*, has been extended to all the dramatic writers of their nation; so that it has become the fashion to condemn the whole German school as vicious and immoral. In this condemnation there is about as much liberality as if foreigners were to select certain indecent passages which occur in our own Shakespeare, or some of the loosest productions of Otway or Congreve, and on their account to brand the whole Drama of England with the character of licentiousness and obscenity.

It was my wish that the reader should peruse *The Patriot Father* without any prejudice of this sort upon his mind, and form his judgment of it from its independent, intrinsic merits.

A second motive that seemed to render concealment desirable arose from the circumstances under which my task was executed. Undertaken, as it was, for amusement, and performed in brief intervals snatched from unremitting and laborious literary avocations, I am but too sensible of the imperfections of this translation, or rather adaptation: for I have not scrupled to omit, to add, or to alter, wherever the original seemed to be susceptible of improvement, or not congenial to English taste and feelings.[1] For this reason I should rather have wished my share in the work to remain unknown.

One consideration, however, was powerful enough to induce me to forego this intention of concealment. I have seen how unmercifully this very Kotzebue has been plundered by dramatists, who have not hesitated to appropriate to themselves the credit to which he is entitled. The conduct of these persons reminds me of the lines of the late Mr. Holcroft, in which he represents our immortal Shakespeare reclining in profound and peaceful slumber—

> While all his elves and fairies round him play'd,
> Voltaire approach'd—straight fled the frolic band—
> For Envy's breath such sprites may not endure;
> He pilfer'd many a gem with trembling hand,
> Then stabb'd the Bard, to make the theft secure.

Somewhat similar has been the treatment experienced by Kotzebue.

With such examples before me, I was fearful lest, if my participation in this performance should become known, my

[1] These alterations extend to the title of the original, which is Die Huſſiten vor Naumburg—The Hussites before Naumburg.

motives might be misconstrued, and I might be suspected, by persons to whom I am a stranger, of a design to defraud the original author of his due. To avoid such an imputation, and, if possible, to apply some corrective to the general notion of the immoral tendency of Kotzebue's plays, I cheerfully make the distinct avowal, that whatever dramatic merit *The Patriot Father* shall be found to possess belongs to him; but that I alone am responsible for the defects of style and language with which this translation may be disfigured.

The event upon which the author has constructed his plot is supposed to have happened during those sanguinary hostilities which succeeded the treacherous sacrifice of Huss, one of the earliest of the German Reformers, whose countrymen, the Bohemians, rose in arms to revenge his death, and laid waste without mercy the adjacent provinces. It is a singular fact that the appearance of this Play produced a warm discussion among the literati of Germany, on the question, whether Naumburg had ever been really threatened by the Hussites, and delivered by the expedient here described, according to the received tradition, apparently confirmed by the customs practised at the festival called *Kirschfest* (Cherry-feast) still held there annually; or whether the whole story was to be considered as a fiction. In the investigation of this subject by Mr. C. P. Lipsius, in a small tract[1] furnished me by the kindness of the late Mr. Böttiger, of Dresden, a gentleman equally distinguished for his talents as an archæologist and his patriotism as a Saxon, that writer has

[1] With the title: Die Sage von den Huſſiten vor Naumburg, und der Urſprung des Naumburgiſchen Kirſchfeſtes, hiſtoriſch-kritiſch unterſucht, von C. P. Lipſius. Naumburg, 1810.

Lepsius, Karl Peter [not Lipsius]

brought forward strong grounds for inclining to the latter opinion.

Leaving national writers to settle this disputed point, I shall merely subjoin one or two historical illustrations of that passage in the Second Act, in which one of the Senators enumerates liquid pitch and stones among the means of defending the city against its assailants. Before cannon came into general use, it was not uncommon to resort to such expedients. Worb, in his *History of Sagan*, informs us that, in 1428, when the Hussites menaced Görlitz, the most vigorous measures for defence were immediately adopted, and that, among other precautions, fifteen brewing-coppers, placed round the town within the ramparts, were filled with eighty stone of melted pitch, for the purpose of being poured upon the enemy, if they should attempt to scale the walls.

Of the means of annoyance employed at the same period, we find a curious elucidation in a contemporary historian of Bohemia, named Hayeck. In 1422, the strong fortress of Karlstein, about twenty miles from Prague, which adhered to the Emperor Sigismund, was invested by the Hussites, chiefly with a view to obtain possession of the royal regalia deposited there—a possession to which, in the notions of those times, almost the virtue of legitimacy was attached. "The Burgrave of Karlstein, however," says Hayeck, "secretly and expeditiously removed the crown to the Bavarian frontier town of Walhartitz, and calmly awaited the hostile force. The latter consisted of twenty-four thousand men, a number unprecedented in that age, who brought with them four heavy cannon, and forty-nine smaller pieces of artillery. The army encamped on the surrounding hills, and not only

kept up a violent cannonade against the fortress, but hurled into it stones, putrid carrion, and matter still more offensive, which was brought from Prague in large barrels, and against the noxious effluvia of which the besieged had no other means of defending themselves than by the use of unslaked lime. About eighteen hundred barrels of such filth, and more than ten thousand nine hundred balls, were thrown into the fortress. The besieged, on their part, among other provocations, suspended by a cord from the principal tower a citizen of Prague, whom they had taken prisoner, placed in his hand a long staff, with a fox's tail fastened to it, and thus, to taunt the enemy, gave him the appearance of repelling their shot with a fly-flap. By their perseverance they at length exhausted the patience of the assailants, who retired without accomplishing their purpose."

Soliciting the reader's indulgence for this digression, I shall detain him no longer than to observe that, whatever may be thought of this attempt, I shall be satisfied if it facilitates to an abler hand the task of adapting for representation a Play, which seems to me, as well on account of the interest of the plot as the admirable moral sentiments that it breathes, to be well worthy of the notice of writers for the British Stage.

F. S.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FREDERIC WOLF, an artisan,
THE BURGOMASTER,
FIRST SENATOR,
SECOND SENATOR,
THIRD SENATOR,
GATEKEEPER,
DOORKEEPER,
FIELDING,
} of Naumburg.
STRANGERS.
PROCOPIUS, General of the Hussites.
HERALD.
FIRST OFFICER.
SECOND OFFICER.
THIRD OFFICER.
FIRST HUSSITE.
SECOND HUSSITE.

BERTHA, wife of Wolf.
WOMEN.

REAPERS; TOWNSPEOPLE; CHILDREN; HUSSITES, &c.

THE PATRIOT FATHER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Market-place of Naumburg. In the background the Town-house, with a flight of steps in front. Time, sunrise.*

Enter a company of Reapers, male and female, with reaping-implements, baskets of provisions, &c., who cross the Market-place in their way to work.

CHORUS.

The sprightly lark proclaims the day,
And calls us to the fields away,
Where the balmy breath of Morn
Gently waves the bending corn.

Now with sickle and with sithe
Haste away each reaper blithe:
For our homes we feel no care—
Have we not left our { fathers / mothers / sisters } there?

Towards the end of the song, WOLF *enters. He receives and returns their friendly salutations, and listens to them with evident delight. As they pass him in going, some of them shake him heartily by the hand. The music gradually dies away.*

Wolf (*alone*). Yes, I do love the sounds of artless joy,
Pour'd for the ample treasures Nature yields,

When all the wide champaign a golden sea
Of undulating ears, full-grained and low
Depending toward the teeming earth, displays;
And to the grateful songs of busy reapers
The glist'ning sickles are in concert plied.
I love, too, this deep silence and repose,
This solemn stillness which pervades the town,
When nought is heard save the shrill cricket's chirp,
Or the dull distant step; when nought is seen,
Save here and there the furrow'd face of Age,
With spectacles on nose, from door or window
Advanc'd with aspect wise to note the weather;
No playful children gambol in the streets:
They too are gone to glean the straggling ears.
But when the welcome tones of vesper-bell
Summon at eve the sunburnt reaper home
From fields his toil hath bar'd—ah! then 'tis sweet
To hear the jocund train with hearts elate
Strike up the harvest-song; the brimming bowl
They raise alternate to their thirsty lips,
And sportive mirth and glee reign uncontroll'd.

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Outside of Wolf's House.*

WOLF *enters, and meets* BERTHA *at the door.*

Wolf. Stirring so soon? I left thee fast asleep.
Ber. I had been here ere this, but, as thou know'st,
Gustavus, little rogue, waits for thy rising,
Comes creeping to me, nestles in my bosom,

And with his winning tricks beguiles the time,
Till Sleep again seals up his laughing eyes.

Wolf. It is a glorious morning, and but now
The jovial train of reapers pass'd our door,
Singing, as they tripp'd merrily along,
A sprightly tune.

Ber. O yes, I heard it all.

Wolf. And well may they rejoice. Hath not the bounty
Of a kind Providence again bestow'd
A rich reward for all the farmers' toils?
The golden sea, as murmuring it waves
I' th' morning breeze—ah! 'tis a sight indeed
To make the heart glad.

Ber. Mine would leap for joy,
Had we but fields to reap the produce of.

Wolf. And so we have. Is not my shop my field,
Where every day I gather in fresh crops,
Reckless alike of seasons, storms, and weather?

Ber. 'Tis so indeed, my Frederic; but should sickness
Again o'ertake thee, and arrest thy labour—

Wolf. Why then all-gracious Heav'n would give my Bertha
Benevolent neighbours.

Ber. But if, which God forbid, I were to lose thee,
What could I then do with eight starving orphans?

Wolf. Industrious habits and a name unstain'd
I leave my boys, and who possesses these
In Naumburg need not starve. If God doth clothe
The lily of the field and feed the sparrow,
Surely my Bertha should not doubt His care.

Ber. Nor do I, Frederic: still I can't but think
That the possession of a field or two
Would give more cheery prospects.

Wolf. So, because
Nor lands nor well-stor'd barns own me their master,
Must I not bear a part i' th' general joy
For this productive harvest? Content, my Bertha,
Is a most precious jewel—and I possess it.
While bounteous Providence preserves thee to me,
And the dear pledges of our mutual love,
While it grants health and strength, a cheerful mind,
A heart attun'd to others' joy and grief—
What need I more to be supremely happy?

Ber. 'Tis just thy way: whatever chance betide
Thou mak'st a source of joy.

Wolf. Ruffle not then
That sweet content which never so o'erflow'd
My grateful heart as at this very moment,
When all conspires to wrap my soul in bliss:
The fragrant and refreshing breeze of Morn —
The reapers' jovial strains—my native town,
In whose dear bosom cherish'd, me the hand
Of Pow'r hath ne'er defrauded of the earnings
Of patient Industry—my little cot
And cheerful garden, where eight chubby boys
Await their father to the gay repast —
And, to crown all, that dearest gift of Heav'n,
A wife, whose virtues and whose tenderness
For fifteen years have been my daily solace!

[*Clasps her in his arms.*

Ber. (*drying her eyes*). I know not how it is, but tears will ever
Start in my eyes, to see thee look so pleas'd,
To hear thee talk so kindly, dearest Frederic.
Wolf. How well those tears become thee! On the day
Which gave thy virgin beauties to these arms
Thou didst not look more lovely!
[*He presses her to his bosom. The alarm-bell is suddenly heard.*]
Ha!—What's that?
Ber. Th' alarm-bell, as I live!
Wolf (*looking round*). Some fire, no doubt,
Is raging in the town.
Ber. (*looking anxiously about*). I can see nothing of it.
Wolf (*going to a little distance*). It is no common accident—else why
So loud? why so impetuous?
Ber. Oh! Frederic, don't leave me thus!
Wolf. Bertha, where are the children?
Ber. They're safe within.
Wolf. Then go thou to them, dear,
And send them quickly out to play i' th' meadow,
While thou and I run to assist our neighbours.
Ber. Let me first look to our own —
Wolf. We've not much
To lose—my tools are speedily remov'd.
[*Looking towards the bell-tower.*]
Ring on, ring on, as thou would'st wake the dead!
And yet I see no fire.
Ber. What can this mean?

Wolf. Stop, here comes neighbour Fielding, pale and breathless.

FIELDING *enters, and hastily crosses the stage.*

Why this alarm, good Master Fielding, say?

Field. (*out of breath*). The foe—is at our gates!

Wolf. The foe! what foe?

Field. The Hussites, Wolf! [*Exit.*

Wolf (*much agitated*). Pray Heav'n it be not so!

Ber. (*in great alarm*). Oh God, have mercy! if it be the Hussites,
'Tis over with us!

Wolf (*assuming a composed air*). Let us not give way,
Dear Bertha, to unreasonable fears.
Fielding is credulous, and I must confess
The more I think the more improbable
The story seems to me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Market-place.*

A troop of Reapers rush upon the stage. The terrified townspeople assemble from all quarters. WOLF *enters.*

Reapers. Woe to us all!

Wolf. What mean ye?

Reaper. At our gates
The Hussites are arriv'd.

Wolf. How can this be?
Is not our brave Elector with his army
Posted at Leipzig, to obstruct the march
Of these marauders?

Reaper. Sha'n't we trust our eyes?
The hills are cover'd with their arm'd battalions,
And flight alone can save us from their vengeance!

The BURGOMASTER *enters, attended by several Senators.*

Burg. Whither away, my friends? what means this tumult,
This strange confusion? Am I yet in Naumburg?
Are these my fellow-townsmen, who were wont
To meet all dangers cool and unappall'd?
Reapers. The Hussites, sir! the Hussites!
Burg. Let your fears
Not gain the ascendant of your better judgment:
Ye know that the Elector hath assembled
A gallant army on the plains of Leipzig,
Five thousand horse and thrice five thousand foot;
That Margrave Frederic of Brandenburg,
Duke William too, and Magdeburg's archbishop,
Have joined him with their troops — what then have we
To fear with such a force?
Reaper. Alas! these eyes
Have seen —
Burg. What have they seen?
Reaper. The standards of the Hussites on the hills,
Their glitt'ring helmets, and a forest wide
Of lances —
Burg. But, friend, why mayn't these be Saxons?
Perhaps th' Elector? If it should be so,
What shame it were to Naumburg to be found
So pusillanimous. Then, courage, townsmen!

I've sent out messengers to learn the truth
Of this report: till their return be tranquil.

Enter several Reapers, with two Strangers.

Reaper. Your honour would not credit our sad tale:
Now hear the testimony of these men.

Burg. Whence come ye, friends?

Stranger. From Gleina, near to Zeitz.

Burg. What know ye?—speak!

Stranger. Th' Elector is defeated, and his army
Dispers'd in flight. Like to the ocean-waves,
The Hussite force, full sixty thousand strong,
Pour'd o'er the mountains—villages, laid waste,
And smoking hamlets, mark'd its dread career.
At length, at Altenburg, the Saxons met
Th' invading foe, but there, o'erwhelm'd by numbers,
The bloody field their carcasses bestrew'd.
The fury of the victors knew no bounds:
The barns, stored with the produce of the year,
The mansions, cottages, and sacred temples,
Alike were wrapp'd in all-devouring flames,
Nor sex, nor age, nor rank, the hell-hounds spar'd.
Such were the scenes that track'd their progress hither,
And now the storm is gather'd o'er your heads.
These eyes beheld promiscuous ruin burst
Over our churches, farms, and peaceful cots,
Our innocent infants bleed beneath the knife
Of sacrilegious butchers, and ourselves
Have scarce escap'd with life to bring the tidings.

The People. Woe to us! woe!

Burg. Shame on these cries! Straight send the women home!
I would consult with men!
[*The sound of a distant trumpet is heard.*
What can this mean?

First Sen. Be not afraid: the gates are all secur'd!

Burg. Beshrew me, friend: thou might'st well spare such comfort:
'Tis conscience that makes cowards! Is it gates,
Or walls of adamant, can give the sense
Of safety to the villain?—while the man,
Whose heart attests his duty well perform'd,
Fears but his God, and knows no fear besides.

GATEKEEPER *enters.*

Gatekeeper. A Herald at the gate demands admittance.

Burg. Conduct him hither.—Fellow-citizens,
Listen with calmness to this messenger;
Let not unmanly terrors or defiance
Be printed on your brows: tranquil and grave,
And silent as your walls, attend his errand,
And let your magistrates, if need be, answer.

The HERALD *enters.*

Be welcome here: if thou'rt a messenger
Of peace, we bid thee welcome.

Her. Not peace, but curses, have I to denounce
Against your city. Men of Naumburg, hear!
Procopius, the Bohemian prince, my master,
Through me informs you why Almighty vengeance

This day pours out its chastisements upon you:
Collect ye then around me, list, and tremble.

Burg. We tremble not ev'n 'fore His pow'r who made us,
For He is merciful.—But, to thy business.

Her. Ye've heard how late there liv'd at Prague a man
Nam'd Huss, endued with wisdom to detect
The craft of Romish priests, and separate
Their idle legends from the word divine,
Which fearlessly he taught: the Roman pontiff
For this declar'd him excommunicate.
The Fathers of the Church, at Constance met,
Summon'd him thither to defend his doctrine
Before their council—cheerful he obey'd,
Nor aught solicited but a safeconduct
From Emperor Sigismund. (*Raising his voice.*) Now mark me well,
Ye men of Naumburg! Emperor Sigismund
Gave such safeconduct to the pious Huss—
To Constance he repair'd, but, in despite
Of the Imperial pledge, loaded with chains,
Consign'd to loathsome dungeons, long he languish'd,
Till at the stake at last his righteous spirit
The martyr yielded up.—We, his disciples,
Have sworn us to avenge our master's murder
With fire and sword—such is the vow we've ta'en.

Know too, ye men of Naumburg, that your Bishop
'Mongst the most furious of those foes was found
Whose voice at Constance gave him to the flames.
Woe, then, upon your town, and threefold woe
Upon yourselves!—for thus the great Procopius,
Our Gen'ral, saith:—"Thou, Naumburg, for the sake

Of this participation of thy prelate,
Shalt from the earth be swept, and not one stone
Be left upon another; that the spot
Where dwelt the sanguinary mitred bigot
May be mark'd only by the rank luxuriance
Of nettles, thorns, and briars." Yet farther hear!
"Whatever lives or breathes within these walls,
Or male or female, age and infancy,
The sword of vengeance shall exterminate.
This very day the sun shall set in blood."
I've done—prepare to die!

Burg. Herald, thou seest
How on the faces of my townsmen round thee
Pale horror sits, while shudd'ring at a deed
In which they had no part: but me, that death,
So awfully denounc'd, surprises not—
We have been long familiar—therefore I
First find my speech to answer. Say, is't just
That the son suffer for the parents' guilt?
What crime have we committed? — full ten years
The Bishop's body moulders in the tomb.

Her. As, then, we cannot call him to a reck'ning,
We wreak our hate on you.

Burg. On harmless citizens,
Whose ears the name of Huss hath scarcely reach'd?
Who, though adhering to our fathers' creed,
Condemn no doctrine, persecute no faith,
Desiring but that peace we leave to others?

Her. All farther words were vain. Our Gen'ral's sentence
Irrevocable cries—Death and Destruction!

Burg. Well it beseems the brave to practise mercy,
To spare a peaceful people, who with joy
Will, from the produce of their fields and flocks,
Amply supply your camp.

Her. All that we need
Our swords procure.

Burg. The treasures of our churches,
Whate'er of gold or silver our poor town
Contains, shall be deliver'd faithfully.
Myself will give th' example.
[*Drawing a ring from his finger.*
Take this jewel—
It is of value—but to me most dear,
As the memorial of a parent's love:
Take it in pledge of our sincerity.

[*Several of the women hastily take off their necklaces, &c.*

One of the Women. Accept the willing sacrifice we offer.

Her. 'Tis vain!—'tis blood we ask!

Burg. (*after some pause*). At least, permit
One of our number to attend you back
To the Bohemian camp: perchance his pray'rs
May touch your leader's heart.

Her. I'll be no hindrance,
Should one be found so bold.

Burg. Myself will go.

Her. Consider well, old man—

Burg. Myself!

Her. I will not answer for your safety;
Your blood might flow the first.

Burg. Let it!

Wolf (*advancing*). No, never
Shall such a precious life incur the risk!
If one the first in dignity of mind,
As first in office, leave the city now,
The common weal might suffer. God be prais'd,
There's not a man in Naumburg but with joy
Would in his stead accept the glorious mission!
And, as kind fortune will'd that I the first
Should raise my voice, to me belongs the priv'lege—
I'll to the camp!

Ber. (*in great agitation*). Wolf, art thou mad?

Wolf. Cease, Bertha!—
Worshipful sir, a sweet presentiment
Lightens my heart, and a resistless impulse
Urges me to the trial. Gifted only
With Nature's simple eloquence, yet oft
Have my words fallen with persuasive force;
Trust therefore to—

Ber. (*in horror*). Bethink thee of thy wife!

Wolf. I must not now.

Her. The fool! he will repent it!

Ber. (*with anguish*). Think of thy children, Wolf!

Wolf. And do I not?
What heritage more precious can a father
Bequeath his children than the fame of virtue?
Gold is soon spent—it passes to the stranger—
A father's virtue is to them an heirloom—
A spark that in the bosoms of their offspring
Kindles the genial glow of gen'rous pride,
Which o'er all sordid passions lifts them high,
And stimulates to deeds of deathless glory.

Then let me go—no second lucky chance
Might give me such a fortune for my sons.
Burg. Your noble actions, fellow-citizens,
Have ever been my pride—therefore with joy
I heard the offer of our worthy townsman.
Go! patriot, go! and may the Almighty's blessing
Attend thy steps, and speed thy safe return!
Her. He'll ne'er return!
Ber. (*wringing her hands*). Eight orphans, Wolf, eight orphans!
Wolf (*pointing to the Burgomaster*). Here is their father, Bertha.—Should my death
Avert destruction from my native town,
Then are they no more Wolf's but Naumburg's children;
Or, should my life be sacrificed in vain,
I shall at least be spar'd the bloody scene
The setting sun shall witness. (*To the Herald.*) Come, I'm ready.
Ber. Hast thou no farewell for a tender wife?
Wolf. Farewell! be firm and weep not: now thou seest
How high I'd soar, draw me not down again!
Ber. No blessing for thy boys, before thou leav'st them,
Perhaps for ever?
Wolf. Cease, Bertha, cease
Thus to unman me—deeds, not words, bring blessing.
[*Exit hastily with the Herald.*
Ber. (*running after him*). Stay, husband, stay!
Burg. (*after an interval of silence*). Ye stand aghast, my friends, your bosoms heave

With sighs of mute despair but half repress'd.
Shake this despondence off ! consider well,
That nothing can avert the threaten'd ruin
But fortitude and courage! Above all,
Humble yourselves devoutly 'fore that Being
Who for long ages hath been gracious to you,
Without whose leave no animated atom,
Nor ev'n the meanest flow'r, sinks into dust.
(*To the Senators.*) Let us now proceed
Whither our duty calls us, to concert
What at our hands the public weal requires.

[*While the Senators, with the Burgomaster at their head, slowly ascend the steps before the Town-house, the people fall on their knees.*]

CHORUS.

Jehovah ! at whose nod
Obedient lightnings to the skies return ;
Who, when the world of waters bursts its bounds,
Sendest thy storms to check its wasteful course;
In our distress, O hear our fervent pray'r,
Abandon not thy people to despair!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Council-chamber in the Town-hall: in the middle of it a table, at which the* BURGOMASTER *and* SENATORS *are seated. The* FIRST SENATOR *stands before an open window, out of which he is intently looking.*

First Sen. Heav'ns! what a concourse at St. James's gate
Of anxious burghers pouring from their homes!

And ev'ry moment how the crowd augments!
The street is fill'd with one vast moving mass —
Now they begin like ocean-waves to roll
Back tow'rd the Market-place.—Ha! is not that
Our Wolf, who 'mid the thickest of the throng
Bends hitherward his steps?—It is!—'tis he!
But what a settled gloom upon his brow,
As, silently advancing 'mong his neighbours,
He points significantly to our Hall!
He comes!—he comes!—but oh! the citizens,
Wringing their hands, interpret but too plainly
The meaning of his silence. [*He returns to his seat.*

BERTHA *rushes into the Hall.*

Ber. He lives!—he is return'd!
Burg. What tidings brings he?
Ber. What care I, so I know my husband lives!
Burg. Woman, retire! Know, too, this solemn place
Is to the public weal devote. No ear
Thou here canst find for private joy and grief.
[BERTHA *timidly retires. The people enter and advance, disregarding the bar. At length* WOLF *appears.*
The People. He's come, but he says nothing!
Burg. Back, my friends,
Nor violate our ancient regulations:
In time of trouble, as in days of peace,
The law must exercise its wholesome rule.
[*The citizens respectfully retire beyond the bar.*
Let Wolf alone advance. [WOLF *comes forward.*] Say, what have we to hope?

Wolf (*in a low tone*). Were it not well these witnesses retir'd?

Burg. Come what come will, together we'll endure it!
The forest, where the huge oak's brawny arms
Defend its weaker neighbours, better braves
The tempest's fury than the single pine
That crowns the mountain's crest. Concealment now
Availeth nought:—speak, Wolf, without reserve.

Wolf. Know then, most honour'd sirs, that with the Herald
Scarce had I scal'd the heights, when suddenly
The Hussite camp appear'd outstretch'd before me.
Like fretful waves impatient of restraint,
Their dusky legions gird the mountain's base;
But their chief force upon the southern hill
Is posted—and ten thousand busy hands
Labour with works of art to fortify
The steep ascent, already strong by nature.
There, a white tent, crown'd with a blood-red dome,
Rears high its haughty head above the rest;
O'er it the standard of the ruthless foe—
A golden goblet in an argent field—
Flouts the air proudly. The Bohemian General
Here keeps his martial state. Through the long files
Of taunting guards, all men of hideous aspect,
With cheeks embrown'd, and grisly, matted beards,
Distain'd by blood and dust, was I conducted
Into their leader's presence.—
"Why, wretch foolhardy,"—thus began Procopius—
"What urges thee first of thy race to brave
The jaws of death?" Nothing dismay'd, I said,

" We're both alike i' th' hand of the same God,
Be He the judge between a lowly man,
Impell'd by something here — (*laying his hand on his heart*) t' incur such risk,
And thee, the mighty ruler of this host."
Burg. How stomach'd he that answer?
Wolf. Long he eyed me
With look inquisitive from head to foot;
At last he sternly cried, " Stranger, proceed!"
O'erjoy'd t' obtain a hearing, I obey'd;
Spoke of our Bishop, who, a foreigner,
Had not imbib'd his persecuting spirit
Within our walls, and whom eternal justice
Had long since summon'd to a strict account
For his misdeeds.—
Next I adverted to our peaceful town;
Show'd how, contented with the humble fare
Of honest industry, we take no heed
Of what befalls beyond our native hills;
Dwelt on our poverty, yet represented
How cheerfully our little all we'd give
To ransom our bare lives.—" I love thy bluntness,"
Replied Procopius; " in such wise as this
None ever yet had courage to address me.
Thou'rt safe—stay here—hence thou at night may'st view
The curling flames enwrap your guilty town."
" Nay, General," so I answer'd, " if thy heart
Remain obdurate still, the only boon
I fain would beg is—death—in mercy grant it!
Then my closed eyes shall not behold the struggles

Of my expiring infants, nor my ears
Be harrow'd with the death-groans of their mother."
" Avaunt!" he cried, flush'd with infuriate rage;
" Begone, presumptuous fool! return, and tell
Thy dastard townsmen that in vain they strive
To wheedle me.—Ere yet the sun shall sink
Behind yon hills, our fierce revenge we'll glut:
The crackling flames shall dye the vault of heav'n,
And not a wretch of your perfidious crew
Shall greet the morning's dawn. As for thyself,
Stir not again beyond the city walls,
Or lingering torments, pangs yet undevis'd,
By cruelty ingenious, here await thee!"
Seized, rudely dragg'd away, thrust from the camp,
My homeward steps the soldiers' taunts pursued.
Burg. Thou hast redeem'd thy word: accept
our thanks.—
Good citizens, retire, that we once more
In quiet may consult: but for the worst
Be ye prepar'd, and make your peace with Heav'n;
Resign yourselves to its severe behests,
Nor think ye of resistance.
First Sen. Heav'n and hell!
What! on our bosoms shall we fold our hands,
And gape for miracles?—No—no—to arms!
Now ev'ry hope is vanish'd, show ye're men!
The resolution of despair gives strength,
And oft works prodigies. Let us not heed
The coward counsels doting Age suggests,
Whose snows each spark of courage have extinguish'd.
Haste to the ramparts, then, brave men of Naumburg,

Prepare for battle—not for paltry plunder—
'Tis for our homes and families we fight!
That Pow'r who nerv'd a stripling's arm and heart
To meet a giant's force still lives. Though fiends
Num'rous as ocean sands beset you round,
His hand can hurl destruction on their ranks,
And blast their purposes. Away! Away!
Quick, carry fuel to the city walls,
Prepare your cauldrons, and of liquid pitch
Pour fiery torrents on th' audacious foe;
And let your wives and children straight collect
Large store of stones to launch upon their heads.
Snatch up what arms ye find—clubs—battle-axes—
Nay, let the pitchfork, sickle, flail, and sithe,
Be, in your vigorous hands, death-dealing tools!
Now to the ramparts!—Should your spirits flag,
Think that your fathers, mothers, children, wives,
Your sweethearts, home and country, life itself,
Are the dear stake ye fight for!

All the People (*rushing out*). To arms! To arms!
To arms!

[Wolf *follows in silence, but stops when he has passed the bar; one moment apparently sharing the general enthusiasm, and the next absorbed in profound thought.*

Burg. (*after a pause*). What boots it that with unsubstantial hopes
We now delude the people?—O'er our heads
Heavy and black Heaven's awful judgments gather;
And, from the murky bosom of the cloud,
That lowers big with death, too soon will burst
The fatal bolt to crush us!

Several Sen. Alas! alas! 'tis true!

Burg. The people have retir'd, and now I dare
Acknowledge the despondence which pervades
My inmost soul. Bow'd with the weight of years,
Bereft—so Fate decreed—of wife and children,
I love my townsfolk as my family:
In their prosperity my happiness
Is center'd; and the last remains of strength
I've cheerfully exerted in the office,
Which by their partial gift I hold. Yet now
These aged eyes, alas! are doom'd to witness
The ruin of the fabric rear'd of yore
By our forefathers, which through various chances
Hath flourish'd still, and which I fondly hop'd
Might pass uninjur'd to posterity.
O happy they who in the quiet grave
Sleep the sound sleep of death!—they have been spar'd
This hard probation; while, in anger, Heav'n
Prolongs my wretched life!

First Sen. O chicken-hearted counsellors! if we
Give up ourselves to the impetuous stream,
As did our timid neighbours, we perforce
Must be like them engulph'd. Who boldly buffets
The stormy surge retains some chance of life.
The worm is trampled on—not so the bee—
The strongest shun its little venom'd shaft;
And thus the firmness of th' infirm themselves
Oft gains respect from might. Take courage, then;
We've solid walls, a broad deep ditch, strong tow'rs,
And an Almighty shield!

Burg. Hath He wrought wonders
To save our neighbours? Are *we* more deserving?
First Sen. Their want of spirit was the pregnant cause
Of their perdition.
Burg. Foolhardy daring is not courage, sir;
None but a maniac with his fists would strive
To quell the fury of the hurricane.
Four thousand men-at-arms our town contains—
No more—now say how we with these can guard
Th' extensive circuit of our walls and towers,
And duly man the various weaker points.
Full forty thousand 'gainst us are encamp'd
Upon the hills, with engines well provided
To force a ready entrance.—For relief,
That well ye know 'twere folly to expect,
Th' Elector beaten and his force dispers'd,
Himself shut up in Leipzig with the relics!
What can we hope, then, from resistance? He
Who sendeth fearful storms to fertilize
The droughty earth, and by His lightnings gives
To the dull air new elasticity—
He, He alone, can change our foes' intent.
Second Sen. Too true! indeed! too true!
First Sen. Would ye then have us,
Patient as lambs, present our naked throats,
And lick the hand that wields the murd'rous blade?
Burg. On us it is incumbent,
As fathers of the city, to protect
The precious charge committed to our care,
At ev'ry cost, and ev'n of life itself.

If then poor Naumburg's final hour be come,
Duty commands that to the fatal axe
We first resign our necks. Let us go forth,
Clad in our robes of office. I will lead you.
Our supplications shall obtain our peace,
Or these gray locks be crimson'd with my blood.

First Sen. Now speak'st thou like a man—we'll follow thee.

[WOLF *meanwhile whispers to the* DOORKEEPER.

Doorkeeper (*advancing*). Worshipful gentlemen, our townsman, Wolf,
Desires once more admission to your presence,
Having some weighty matter to propose.

Burg. Give him admittance.

Wolf. Forgive me, sirs, if a plain man presume
In this extremity his mite to offer:
Good counsel may spring from the humblest source;
A rugged shell oft holds the fairest pearl;
And virgin gold in common sand lies hid.

Burg. What hast thou to propose?

Wolf. In this necessity, 'twere fit we risk
What's dearest to us for the public weal.

First Sen. Our lives!

Wolf. No—what is dearer far—our children.

Burg. Explain thy meaning.

Wolf. Ye would go forth yourselves—a resolution
Which well befits the fathers of the State:
But, ah! bethink you, when the shepherd's gone,
The flock is left defenceless—whilst your blood
Would only quench our last faint spark of hope.
The citizens, dishearten'd by your loss,

Would not know how to act, or whom t' obey:
'Twere not judicious, then, to leave the town.

Burg. Say, what is thy advice?—the time is precious.

Wolf. Let us collect our children, boys and girls,
From five to fourteen years of age, and send them,
Clad in white garments, to the Hussite camp:
Let them march two and two, the youngest first,
Surround the General's tent—which easily
May be distinguish'd by the floating standard—
Fall on their knees, and raise their folded hands,
Cry, Mercy! Mercy! nor desist till they
Have won that boon from the relenting foe.

Burg. How if his thirst of blood demand their slaughter?

Wolf. Then let them render up their guiltless lives
To Him who gave them!—But woe to the Hussites!
Then will the father feel a lion's rage,
Then ev'ry mother will become a tigress:
Together we will leave the dreary town,
Which childish prattle ceases to enliven,
And seek the spot dyed with our infants' gore—
There each will rise a hero—nay, a god—
And in each mother's hand the peaceful reaphook
Gleam an avenging sword!

Second Sen. Against a host like sand upon the shore,
The conflict would be vain.

Wolf. Ev'n were it so, bereft of that which gives
Its highest zest to life, how could we wish
Still to preserve it?

First Sen. For me, I can't approve his counsel.

Second Sen. Our Chief approves it—but he has no children—
To him it is an easy sacrifice;
Two darling boys like mine would work some change
In his opinion.

First Sen. I have but one child,
The comfort of my life.

Third Sen. I've three, and yet
Each is as dear as though the only one.

Wolf. Forgive a smile that will not be repress'd.—
Who is the richest here?—who can, like me,
Summon eight hearty boys around his board?
And yet, believe me, if one single place
Out of the eight were at my table vacant—
Had I one portion less to deal, though earn'd
With toil severe, my well-known gaiety
Were fled—for ever fled! True, I am happy,
And, as the richest parent in your town,
Have I not cause to be, when eightfold joy
Beams from the blooming faces of my offspring?
[*He steps to the door.*
Ho! hither, children!—Sirs, with your good leave!

WOLF'S *eight boys enter and surround him.*

See, here they are! upon their glowing cheeks
Rude health is pictur'd. Judge ye for yourselves
How happy such a sight must make a father!—
Their hearts are sound, too. Come now, tell me, urchins,
Which of you loves me best?

All the Children (*clinging round him*). I!

Wolf. I told you so:
I am the richest—yes, 'fore God!—the richest!
Still I say:—Take them! 'tis the State demands
The painful gift—take them! ay, take my all!

Second Sen. (*rising*). I give my children, too.

First Sen. (*rising*). I'll not be worse than Wolf; my boy shall go.

Third Sen. (*rising*). So shall my three.

Fourth Sen. (*rising*). 'Tis fitting our example
Dispose our fellow-townsmen.

[*They all rise.*

Burg. O noble Wolf, receive our grateful thanks:
If, in this dire necessity, thy counsel
Procure relief, expect a rich reward.

Wolf. If ye're deliver'd, and if these return
Unhurt, what greater, sweeter recompence
Can I desire? The very thought is bliss,
To which all earthly riches are but trash;
And, when anticipation hath such joys,
What must be those, if Providence should prosper
Our enterprise, that will be his who plann'd it!

[*Exit with the children.*

Burg. Well may a State exult whose ranks contain
Such patriot citizens! and we, 'fore Heav'n!
May deem us happy, ruling such a town.—
Colleagues, let us away, if not to share
The glory of the act, at least the care!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Outside of Wolf's House.*

BERTHA *comes out of the house, and looks anxiously around.*

Ber. Methought I heard the sound of lamentation
From distant female voices, intermix'd
With harsher tones of men.—Again all's still!
How ev'ry noise alarms me!—if a door
But shuts, or window rattles, how I start,
As though the final, dreadful hour were come!
Frederic, where art thou?—Here I am alone—
Our neighbours' houses empty—not a soul,
Not one, is left—it used not to be thus!
None but the happy ought to flee mankind,
For solitude is like the night, whose shades
Give double brilliance to the friendly stars,
But double horrors to the lightning's glare.

WOLF *enters.*

Art come at last, my husband? Oh, remove
The load of anxious care that racks my heart!

Wolf. Courage, dear Bertha, courage!

Ber. I heard confused murmurs—tell me, Wolf,
What they denote?

Wolf. A patriot citizen
Proposed a last expedient.

Ber. Say, what was it?

Wolf. As it were vain to hope relief from force,

The man advis'd that we should try th' effect
Of feeble innocence, and send the children—
Ber. (*in great alarm*). Children!—what children?
Wolf. All of a proper age
Belonging to our town—
Ber. (*with increased alarm*). And ours too?
Wolf. Certainly; when others give
Their bosoms' darlings, could ours be refus'd?
Ber. All, say'st thou?
Wolf. Yes, all of a certain age.
Ber. Sure I've misunderstood!—Would ye send out
Our children to the Hussites?
Wolf. Even so.
Ber. (*in extreme agitation*). Send them to certain death?
Wolf. Forbid it, Heav'n!
'Tis hop'd their artless innocence will touch
The barbarous invaders.
Ber. (*after a pause*). A proposal!—
Said'st thou not so?
Wolf. I did.
Ber. Indeed a shrewd one!
Wolf. O how it glads me, Bertha, that so nobly
Thou keep'st the public interest in view!
Ber. Why should I not?—though much I apprehend
Few of our burghers would—indeed the noise
I heard but now suffices to convince me
The well-meant plan has been rejected by them.
Wolf. O no! they hasten, on the contrary,
To execute it.
Ber. What! already!

Wolf. Yes:
Our state admits not of delay.
Ber. The Burgomaster—doth he approve it?
Wolf. Certainly.
Ber. He has no children—but the Senators?
Wolf. Theirs are all going.
Ber. Are they so, indeed?
And how behave the mothers? what say they?
Wolf. Hear, and take comfort in thine own distress,
From the keen pangs that rack their tender breasts.
No sooner was th' approval of the Senate
Made public, than, with consternation fill'd,
Our matrons throng'd the streets: some on their knees
Embrac'd their infants with convulsive throes;
Some sought their little ones lost in the crowd;
Some wearied Heav'n with agonizing prayers;
While some scream'd forth the curses of despair.
In vain their husbands by caresses strove
To pacify their rage. The meekest now
Became a fury. Breaking from the arms
Of spouses, fathers, brothers, quick they hied
To seek the magistrates. In vain their Chief
Essay'd to appease them: reckless of his office,
His worth and reverend age, they fell upon him,
And would have torn him piecemeal, had not we,
After fierce conflict, freed him from their gripe.
The fitful fever of despair being past,
Nature resum'd her rights—from ev'ry eye
A torrent burst — as when a sulph'rous cloud —
Its fiery freight disgorg'd — refreshing show'rs
Sheds o'er the parched plains. Mild Reason pour'd

Her soothing balm upon their wounded hearts,
And bade them hope. Submissive to our fate,
With silent tears, they led their children home,
To speed them for the camp.

Ber. (*who has listened to his narrative with the most painful sympathy*). So soon? to-day?

Wolf. Anon the drum will summon them together
Here in the Market-place. — Sooner, I ween,
Their mothers had to stern necessity
Resign'd themselves, had but my dearest love,
My noble, patriot wife, highminded Bertha,
Appear'd among them as a bright exemplar;
For oft the tranquil greatness of one spirit
Can awe the jarring passions into peace.

Ber. Seek'st thou with empty praise to tranquillize
This bursting heart? No more on't, if thou lov'st me!
I'm neither man nor angel, but — a mother!
I, too, can only execrate the fiend,
Who this infernal project hath devis'd.
He is no father — no — a father's joys
He never knew — nor in his arms hath press'd
A loving wife — nor dandled on his knee
A darling babe! Name me the monster, Wolf,
That I may curse him!

Wolf. Behold him —— here!

Ber. (*recoiling with horror*). Thou, Wolf!

Wolf. Yes, I.

Ber. Thou — *father* — thou?

Wolf. Condemn me not, my love: —
In such a crisis, when our very lives

Are not our own, tell me, can there be aught
Too precious for a citizen to venture?
Or doth not duty bid him risk his all?
Ber. The *citizen* I grant thee — but the *father?*
Wolf. He sends his children thither where alone
Deliv'rance can be sought —
Ber. Into the talons
Of rav'nous vultures!
Wolf. And where Hope suggests
That their defenceless innocence and pray'rs
May ope the savage warriors' steeled hearts.
Ber. But the effect had surely been the same
Here in the midst of us!
Wolf. A tear may quench a spark, but not extinguish
The raging flame. When resting from the turmoil
Of arms, the soldier melts at the distress
Of helpless infancy — but, in th' assault,
Urg'd by resistance, to revenge provok'd
By thickening dangers, he forgets the man,
And cleaves, transfixes, dashes out the brains
Of little wretches shrieking for his mercy.
Ber. I must believe 'tis right — a woman's duty—
So we are taught, at least — is to submit.
I'll strive, then, to admire what wrings my heart. —
Send out the children! I'm content! —Yet *all* —
Must *all* go?
Wolf. Who can arrogate the right
To make exceptions?
Ber. Who reserves but one
In eight, may still, methinks, with justice boast

A sacrifice sufficient for his country.

Wolf. But less than his, who, having only one,
Gives up that one.

Ber. Drive me not, with thy chilling arguments,
To desperation, Wolf! Have I eight times
Endur'd a mother's pangs to die *alone?*
Who then will close these tear-exhausted eyes?
Who drop the dew of sorrow on my grave?
Oh! burst my heart at once, and then 'tis o'er!
My heart, to which maternal love is needful,
As is the air thou breathest to thy life.
In mercy, O my husband! leave me *one* —
One of my boys, to inherit undivided
That tenderness which all of them have shar'd!

Wolf. Bertha!

Ber. One out of eight will not be miss'd! —
I'll hide him — never fear!

Wolf. Could'st thou but see
The daggers which thou plantest in my breast!

Ber. Will it not be a solace to thine age,
When this unnatural fev'rish force hath left thee,
To be a father still — to see thy boy,
Preserved by my tears, smile in thy face?
Oh! then thou'lt thank me with thy warmest love,
For all the pains this day inflicted by me:
[*Falling on her knees.*
Thou'lt not deny me! — one is all I ask!

[*Overcome with the violence of her emotion, she sinks upon the stage.*]

Wolf (*raising her*). Bertha! — my dearest Bertha,
be it so!

Ber. (*ardently embracing him*). Oh thanks, thanks, thanks, for one child's life at least,
Begg'd of his father! —

Wolf (*feigning consent*). Let us now consider
With which of them we can the best dispense,
And which we shall retain.

Ber. (*anxiously*). Yes, what think you?

Wolf. Let Conrad go—the quiet, simple Conrad.

Ber. Have we not so much greater cause to love him?

Wolf. Joseph shall go, then; he was always sullen.

Ber. He sullen! then your harshness made him so;
He ne'er was disobedient to his mother.

Wolf. Frederick, whose whining hath so oft annoy'd us.

Ber. That delicate boy yet needs a mother's care.

Wolf. William is wild; we can spare him.

Ber. Oh husband!
Was he not like a lamb when you lay ill,
And praying every hour for his poor father?

Wolf. Gustavus, then —

Ber. Rather kill me at once
Than take my darling boy, who ev'ry night
Slumbers upon my bosom!

[*A pause.* BERTHA *wrings her hands, and then stands motionless, absorbed in thought.*

Wolf. How can I torture her with farther questions!
She feels herself how hard it is to chuse!
Each child, when danger threatens, is the dearest.
(*To* BERTHA.) Bethink thee, Bertha, and decide; meanwhile
I will prepare the children. [*Exit into the house.*

Ber. (*after a pause*). Is that the man whose heart
for fifteen years
Responsive beat to mine? — to whom I loved
To tell my inmost thoughts, to ope my soul,
To which his own in sympathy attun'd
Harmoniously would vibrate? Ah! alas!
What unknown horrors now estrange me from him!
That marble heart no pray'rs, no tears, can move! —
How he tore from me! His affection now
Partakes not as it us'd in all my griefs.
Alone I stand — all other feelings here
Are silenc'd in this one — I am a mother! —
What is the State to me?—what all the world?
I live but in my children!—
Can a father
Aught of those thousand nameless cares conceive
Which rack a mother's bosom? For his nature
Her joys are too refined. What can he know
Of that extatic transport which she feels,
When first his eager lips her babe applies
To press the willing nipple? — what of that,
When from his ruby gum the budding tooth,
Dearer to her than pearl or orient gem,
First greets her anxious eye? — or of her bliss,
When from his tongue the first articulate sound
Salutes her charmed ear?
Man's rugged breast
To such endearing sentiments is shut;
And thus he can demand of me a choice
Which cracks my heart-strings!—No, it cannot be!
Compar'd with such a trial death were mercy!

[*She is about to enter the house.* WOLF *meets her at the door, and clasps her in his arms.*]

Wolf. I heard thee, Bertha, and by Heav'n I swear
Thou dost me wrong! — my heart is not less scath'd
Than is thine own.

Ber. And I—I must confess,
Thy words no longer strike those sweet accords
Which they were wont within this tortur'd breast.—
Accurs'd misgiving! — were it possible
That from this fond, fond heart, my love to thee,
The father of my children, I must tear,
Then were my cup of mis'ry full indeed! —

[*She sinks from his arms upon a bench before the house. The* BURGOMASTER *enters.*

Burg. The public quiet is restor'd, and now
Our matrons bow them to the rigid law
Of dire necessity — deep sobs alone
From forth the open doors assail the ear:
Each in imagination hears the signal,
To them more awful than the last dread trump.

Ber. (*tauntingly, in a low tone*). Ha! here he comes!—Naumburg's Chief Magistrate,
So chosen by the citizens, who hoped
Protection from his wisdom: — that he's wise
Who can deny, when, to prolong the date
Of his brief winter day, he coolly gives
The vernal years of infants? Gold he never
Extorted from us—no—he is content
With scores of children's lives, that he may die
In quiet in his bed—the childless churl!

Wolf. Cease, Bertha, cease!

Burg. Nay, let her vent her griefs.—
It is the common lot of those who rule,
That on their shoulders still is laid the charge
Of all the ills that e'er befall the State.
If Fate's stern mandates they cannot control;
If the wing'd lightnings by a magic word
They cannot charm; if unkind seasons blast
The farmers' hopes; if 'neath the boiling waves
Rich fleets are whelm'd—what boots it that their toils,
Or prudent counsels, may have sav'd the land
From Anarchy's fell gripe, and foil'd rebellion!
'Tis all forgot—straight on their luckless heads
Light the deep curses of their thoughtless people.

Wolf. Posterity at least will render justice,
And pay the debt of gratitude denied
By their unthankful fathers.

Burg. One doubt alone disturbs me; it is this,
Whether the little ones will find their way
To the Bohemian Chieftain's camp.

Wolf. I'll lead them!

Ber. (*with horror*). What say'st thou, Wolf?

Burg. A cruel death awaits
If thither thou return'st—what could'st thou, then?

Wolf. Share death or mercy with the infant troop.

Burg. (*grasping* Wolf's *hand*). Well, be th' event
committed to His hands
Who governs all things!

Ber. So then at last thy deep design is out!
Boast of thy courage, while thy coward soul
Broods o'er the plan to pluck from Death its sting
For thine own person!—For the lone despair

Of her whose fate is bound to thine thou reck'st not.
Thou with the unconscious victims wilt go forth,
And in the worst event fall with thy boys;
While to the dreary walls I pour my woes,
And ev'ry racking moment of suspense
Endure the horrors of a thousand deaths! —
Magnanimous, indeed!
To shift thy portion of the cruel load
On woman's feebler frame! Oh! it is plain,
Thou know'st but how to die—not how to suffer! —
This time thou shalt not triumph—I will go!
I'll lead the infant troop, and though, like thee,
I have no subtle speeches, no smooth words,
Yet there is eloquence in woman's tears.

Wolf. (*in extreme agony*). Heav'n grant the issue
Prove as successful as the trial's hard!

Burg. Cheer up, good Bertha!—infant innocence
The savage warriors' rage will sure disarm;
For Nature hath on helpless loveliness
Conferr'd a spell more potent than their swords.

Ber. Can there be mercy in the rav'ning tiger,
To whom the bloody banquet gives fresh gust
For human carnage? (*Distractedly.*) Ha! see there!
the monsters!
See, how they whet their swords!—Now, now, they
seize
The struggling victims by their silken locks!
And now they drag them with exulting yells!
'Tis my Gustavus!—hold! ye demons—hold!

[*As the last word dies away on her lips, she sinks senseless into the arms of* WOLF, *who places her upon*

the ground, reclining against the bench. Meanwhile the drum begins to beat. Weeping mothers arrive from all sides, some leading their infants by the hand, others carrying them in their arms. Their appearance rouses WOLF, *who, with his eyes fixed on his wife, has been hitherto plunged in a profound reverie. He opens the door of his house, and calls out his eight children. He makes them kneel around their insensible mother, whose drooping hand he places upon the head of the youngest. He stands for a few moments in the attitude of prayer. The mothers, in various groups, take leave of their children, embrace them for the last time, and with averted faces motion them to go. The children assemble in the background, on the steps of the Town-house. The* BURGOMASTER *waves his hand, and the drum ceases: he goes up to the children, and attempts to speak, but is prevented by the violence of his emotion. A pause succeeds, in which nothing is heard but the sobs of the distracted mothers.*]

Burg. Go, and may all good angels be your safeguard!

[*He gives the signal for departure*—WOLF *heads the procession, which begins to move.*]

CHORUS.

Your fathers' trembling lips their blessings pour;
Your mothers' tears attend you on your way;
Your country's fate, in this decisive hour,
Is link'd to yours. Heav'n grant this last essay
May melt the stubborn hearts of Naumburg's foes,
And turn our dire alarms to sweet repose!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Camp of the Hussites on the hills before Naumburg. In the middle of the stage appears the tent of* PROCOPIUS. *In the foreground, on the left, three of his Officers are reclining on the turf. On the right a sentinel walks to and fro. In the background others of the Hussites are seen forming various groups.*

FIRST SOLDIER *sings.*

When the red falchions clash
In combat dire;
In the fir'd convents' crash
When nuns expire;
When childless mothers' groans
In ev'ry street,
And infants' dying moans
Make music sweet;

CHORUS.

In the bloody affray then join all ye brave bands;
Let Revenge steel your hearts, let Revenge nerve your hands!

SECOND SOLDIER *sings.*

Scar'd from the couch of Death
By Horror's train,
When the sick yield their breath
On piles of slain;
When tender virgins raise
Shrieks of despair,
And Age in vain essays
To pour the pray'r;

CHORUS.

In the bloody affray then join all ye brave bands;
Let Revenge steel your hearts, let Revenge nerve your hands!

First Officer. Hold, my fine fellows, hold! your song's too tender:
I can't endure such melting melodies.
Second Officer. Well said! when bloated priests broil in the flames,
Or children's skulls against the bloody pavement
Are dash'd, then other tones salute the ear.
First Officer. The sun is high—why loll we here inactive?
Our this day's task we might ere now have done.
Why give this respite to the Papist dogs?
Third Officer. For their last pray'r.
Second Officer. A needless favour, faith!—
They must be damn'd at last.
First Officer. Plenty of work
Is yet left for our arms here in Thuringia,
Ere we can boast us, in our native land,
That Huss's death has fully been reveng'd.
Sentinel. Look yonder!
Second Officer. What is't?
Sentinel. The valley's all in motion!
First Officer. The mice would scarcely venture from their hole
While the cat sits before it.
[*They rise, go towards the Sentinel, and look down the hill.*
Second Officer. By all the devils!
What can it be?
First Officer. The valley sure enough is all alive,
Just like an ant-hill. There is something too
That dazzles as the sun from snow reflected.
Third Officer. 'Tis not the glare of arms, though.

Second Officer. Wait a moment,
Till they have pass'd yon rock, round which the path
Winds upward: then we shall discern them better.
First Officer. Look where they come!
Second Officer. Is't magic, comrade?
Or what see'st thou?
First Officer. Why, unless Satan place
Unreal visions 'fore mine eyes, they're children.
Second Officer. So, as I live, they are!
First Officer. And many yet so small, as if but now
Dropp'd from their nurses' laps.
Third Officer. The steep hill tires them.
Second Officer. See! the larger lend
Their hands to help the little urchins on.
First Officer. Ay, come; ye here shall find a resting-place,
And we will kindly ease you of the toil
Of going back.
Third Officer. I can perceive among them
One man alone.
Second Officer. The same, if right I ken,
Who on that bootless errand came this morning.
First Officer. This time he will receive the due reward
Of his audacity.
Second Officer. But see, how briskly
The little wretches tow'rd us still advance,
As though the most convenient place they thought
To find here for their sports!
Third Officer. 'Tis droll, indeed!
Second Officer. I will acquaint the General.

First Officer. Procopius hath to-day received good tidings
From far Bohemia, from his wife and children,
And in his gaiety an extra cup
He drank, which hath o'erpowered him, and he takes
A brief repose.

Second Officer. I'll wake him.

(*To the soldiers, many of whom have successively gathered round the Officers.*)

Ye, meanwhile,
Firmly present your spears and keep them back,
Till by our Gen'ral shall the word be giv'n
For slaughter.

First Officer. Soldiers, do what he commands!

[*He places himself at their head; and they occupy, with presented spears, the whole side on which the children are ascending.*]

Still they come nearer, and but little seem
To care about our spears. Ho! hoa! back there!
Fall back, ye little wretches!—are ye blind?
Will ye run on the pikes?—Back! back, I say!

[*The children advance in a line along the whole side of the stage, with folded hands, and their eyes fixed on the Hussites, regardless of the spears of the latter. Step by step, as they come forward, the Hussites involuntarily retire to the opposite side.*]

It is most strange! sure we must be bewitch'd!
Shame on you!—keep your ground!

[*The Hussites recede to the other side of the stage, and are at length obliged to raise the points of their spears to avoid wounding the children.*]

What power unseen deprives my arm of strength! —
What numbing chillness courses through my veins! —
What spell enchains us! This must be enchantment!

Children (*quickly forming a circle round the tent of* PROCOPIUS, *where they fall on their knees*). Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!

[WOLF *stands aside, in the front of the stage, in the attitude of prayer.* PROCOPIUS, *with hurried step, comes out of his tent. His face glows with rage. The children lift up their clasped hands to him. He stops, astonished at the sight of them.*]

Pro. Mercy!—What may this mean? Ha! whose presumption
Dares tamper with me thus?—(*To the children.*) Rise! rise? I order you!

[*He snatches up the two children nearest to him with violence by their arms, and angrily advances. The children attempt to cling about him, but he spurns them from him.*]

Nay, nay, begone!
Twine yourselves not around me, little snakes! —
Who hath contrived this? (*Discovers* WOLF.) Thou here again,
Audacious man! spite of my prohibition?

Wolf (*with profound humility*). As deputy of Naumburg thou forbad'st me
To appear again before thee—not as Father.

Pro. Who taught thee, insolent, thus to interpret
My words?

Wolf. My confidence i' th' magnanimity
Of a brave Prince.

Pro. Thou but deceiv'st thyself,
And giv'st these infants to the fatal axe.
Wolf. The lordly lion slays no puny foe —
He seeks but victims worthy of his strength.
Pro. Think ye, with flattery, with children's tears,
To cozen men?—Oh most courageous people!
Wolf. As for my courage—put it to the test.
Pro. How, if I take thee, braggart, at thy word!
Wolf. Only spare Naumburg, and dispose of me
Even as thou wilt!
Pro. Say, then, which are thy children;
Their blood alone shall quench my hot revenge.
Wolf (*horror-struck, after some pause*). If thou wilt spare the rest—why—be it so!
Pro. Their forfeit lives shall pay the city's ransom.
Wolf (*shuddering*). O Heaven! I bow me to Thy dread decree!
Pro. Where are the wretches, that my sword may speed
Its destin'd task?
Wolf. First swear by Huss's blood
That Naumburg shall be safe.
Pro. Well, by the blood
Of martyr'd Huss, I swear it!
Wolf. Thou wilt grant
One favour more—let me die with my children!
Pro. No, thou shalt live—thou shalt but see them suffer.
Wolf. Thou keep'st thy word, when tortures undevis'd
Thou did'st denounce.

Pro. What! thy heart fails thee, dastard!

Wolf. Hath not a father's eyes betray'd his lambs?
And must he lead them to the block himself?—
Nature, thou art too strong!—indeed I cannot!

Pro. Demand'st thou oaths for makegames?

Wolf. Who plays the cruellest game here, thou or I?

Pro. Driv'ler, dar'st thou remonstrate?

Wolf. Alas! whom shall we deem magnanimous,
If conquerors want that virtue? Yet bethink thee,
That thou, like us, may'st once have need of mercy;
That while thy victor sword thou here imbruest
In harmless infants' gore, thy foes perchance
May overrun thine own Bohemia's plains,
And prowl, like famish'd wolves, in search of prey
Ev'n to thy palace, where thy helpless babes,
As these, may lift their little hands for mercy,
But lift in vain. With Saxon trophies rich,
When home thou hiest, crown'd with triumphant wreaths,
And find'st the bloody witness of thy loss
Within thy desolate walls—then, Prince, thou'lt feel
Some portion of the pangs thou now inflictest.

Pro. Presumptuous! die! (*Drawing his sword upon* WOLF.)

WOLF'S *Children* (*all rushing from among their companions and surrounding him*). Oh! father! father! father!

[PROCOPIUS *stands motionless.*

Wolf (*clasping his children in his arms in one group*).
They have betray'd themselves!—thou know'st them now!—

Not one remain'd behind!
A father's life was dearer than their own:—
Now kill my boys, if thou'st the heart to do it.

Pro. (*furiously*). Die, little wretches! [*He seizes one of the children, and, looking him in the face, suddenly starts back in wild astonishment. He stoops to examine his features more closely.*]
How cam'st thou hither, Ferd—
(*Aside.*) O no, no, no, it cannot be my Ferdinand!
And yet so like him!

Child. O, how I'll love thee,
If thou'lt not kill my father!
[*Throwing his arms round the neck of* PROCOPIUS *and kissing him.*]

One of the Younger Children. And so will I.

Another. And I too.

The Eldest. O, do not hurt my father!—
If for our sakes thou'rt not dispos'd to mercy,
Did'st thou but know how our poor mother loves him,
Thou would'st relent—I'm sure she would die too,
Were he not to return with us—and then,
Father and mother gone—poor friendless outcasts,
Our only restingplace would be the grave.—
Yet, if thou must have blood, I pray thee, take
My life—I sha'n't be miss'd—but kill my father,
Thou killest mother, brothers, all, in him!

[PROCOPIUS, *deeply affected, slowly returns his sword to the sheath, and looks round, first at the children, who have again thrown themselves upon their knees about him, and then at his soldiers, the ferocity of whose looks gradually softens into pity.*]

Pro. I won't dissemble, comrades: since this heart
First learn'd to throb, it ne'er receiv'd a shock
So fierce as this. If, then, your sentiments
Accord with mine—if ye're inclined to mercy,
Lower your spears. [*All the Hussites lower their spears.*
So be it! (*Aloud.*) Mercy! mercy! rise, be joyous!

[*The children joyfully repeat the word* MERCY, *and crowd round* PROCOPIUS, *kissing his hands and embracing his knees. Moved by their artless caresses, he lifts up one after another and kisses them.* WOLF *meanwhile kneels in silent prayer.*]

Pro. Bring bread, and wine, and fruit, that our young guests,
After their terrors, may regale themselves!
Send our musicians too, and let them play
A cheerful tune—let the whole camp be merry!

[*Several Hussites hasten to obey his commands.*

Wolf. The anguish'd heart found words—in joy 'tis dumb.

Pro. I feel as I had won a victory,
And yet stand here subdued by feeble children!

[*Attendants bring him wine. He fills a bowl, and hands it to one of the girls.*
Here, drink, my pretty maid, drink and be cheery,
And let the bowl right merrily go round!

Wolf (*wiping his eyes*). Flow, flow, ye drops of joy!

[*The band behind the scenes strikes up a national air.*

Pro. Oh! welcome sounds!
How ye remind me of my much-lov'd home! —
Bring my camp-chair, that 'mid this happy throng
I may enjoy myself.

[*An attendant brings the camp-chair, upon which* PROCOPIUS *seats himself. Other attendants enter with baskets of fruit, which they distribute among the children. Meanwhile the music is accompanied by the following song.*]

Ye little strangers, freely
Indulge in mirth and joy;
And let not cruel memory
Your happiness annoy.
The sparkling bowl quaff gaily,
And share the simple treat,
Exulting in your victory,
As we in our defeat.

[*During this song, the children encircle* PROCOPIUS, *and begin to sport round him till the music ceases.*]

Pro. Good! good! ye almost make a child of me.

Wolf. Though Vict'ry sheds her glories o'er thy host,
And binds her laurels round thy conqu'ring brow,
Say, mighty Prince, if these can glad thy heart,
Like one such hour as this. The time will come,
When Peace shall lead thy war-tir'd legions home,
And your ensanguin'd swords have rest. Perchance,
Mem'ry may then revolve the deeds of blood
Done by thy followers. Busy Fancy, too,
Perchance, may picture hideous, threat'ning ghosts,
Begash'd with wounds—mothers, with broken hearts,
In Death's convulsive agonies, beside
The mangled corses of their murder'd offspring.
May then the sweet remembrance of this day
Banish the fearful phantoms! May the scene

Thou here beholdest and the joys thou shar'st
Be feelingly renew'd!

A Hussite (*entering hastily*). Sir, in the valley
An armed force, of strange accoutrement,
Cover'd, as it would seem, with large white shields,
Is seen to approach the hills.

Pro. Treachery! treachery!

The Hussite. Sufficient reinforcements we've despatch'd
To our advanc'd posts, to prevent surprise;
In a few moments we shall ascertain
What unknown foe thus threats us.

Pro. Ha! traitor, thought ye by this mummery
To lull our vigilance, and unawares
To fall upon us? (*Drawing his sword.*) From our topmost height
We'll hurl these slaughter'd hostages upon you!

Wolf. Hold, Prince! it is not—it cannot be so!
Inform yourself—there must be some mistake.

Hussite. A breathless messenger already comes
With quick pace up the hill.

Second Hussite enters.

Pro. (*hastily*). Who is the foe? Speak, man!

Second Hussite. A false alarm!—
The women of the town in long white scarfs,
Which in the distance show'd at first so strangely.

Wolf. The mothers of these children.

Second Hussite. They're within bow-shot of our posts; so near
Indeed that we distinctly hear the sounds

Of sighs and lamentations. I have order'd
Our spearmen to obstruct their farther progress.
Wolf. Prince! complete
The work of grace! Restore these tender objects
To their distracted mothers—peace to Naumburg!
Think that each moment of suspense must be
An age to their impatience.
Pro. Go! go in peace! Break branches from the trees,
And, as ye near the city, wave them high—
High o'er your heads—join in one general shout:
Victory o'er the Hussites!—Victory!—
Move in procession to your Senate-house—
There say: Procopius, the Bohemian General,
Sends friendly greeting, and he bids me tell you,
To-morrow's early sun shall find no trace
Of his battalions on your hills—for he
Is vanquish'd by your children!—Go in peace!—
Go! ye'll unman me quite!—O my lov'd wife,
My darling babes, would I were now with you!
[*He retires slowly to his tent.*
Wolf. Bear with thee in thy bosom the conviction,
That to the mighty, conscious of his strength,
The exercise of mercy is more sweet
Than vengeance wreak'd on a defenceless foe!
[*Martial music. The children retire two by two.* Wolf *looks on with evident delight, and follows them.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*An open place before the gates of Naumburg, with gentle hills on the left. Upon and about these hills the women are seen sitting or standing in attitudes indicative of grief. On the opposite side, in the foreground, appears* BERTHA, *absorbed in silent reverie.*]

CHORUS.

Ah! what anxious hopes and fears
Rack the fond maternal breast!
Better far the threat'ning spears
Of our foes had giv'n us rest!

While the purple current steals
Through a mother's throbbing veins,
For her child her bosom feels
All Affection's joys and pains.

None but that Celestial Pow'r,
Who hath plac'd such passions there,
Can, in this distressing hour,
Lighten each sad mother's care.

Ber. 'Tis well for them!—
Now their despair resolves to gentler sorrow;
Ere grief can vent itself in tones like these,
The tortur'd bosom must more freely breathe.
To me alone hath niggard Fate denied
Community of solace, not of woe.
But why to me alone? Oh! why hath horror
Absorb'd my senses, feelings, faculties?
And why to these the kind relief of tears

Hath Nature giv'n, but to my strained eyes
Refus'd that boon? —
She is no stepdame either: all her children
Are equal objects of her fostering care.
Ah! she relents—and now the soothing drops
Rush to their wonted channels, and distil,
Like dews refreshing on the parched soil. [*Weeping.*

Burg. (*coming from the gate, and approaching* BERTHA).
The sentry station'd in the watch-tow'r tells
That in the camp extraordinary bustle —

Ber. So, then, the work of slaughter is begun! —
The heartless butchers ply their bloody trade! —
Kneeling upon their brothers' carcasses,
The infants yield their throats to the fell stroke,
And, with a grin of hellish joy, the murd'rers
Brandish their glist'ning swords!

Burg. No! nothing of the kind! Nor sword nor lance
Their dazzling glare in the sun's beams throw back
Upon the watchman's eye: he deem'd it rather
A scene of merriment.

Ber. Ah! very true! what need have they of arms?
A knife were quite sufficient to despatch
Our whole flock of defenceless lambs—while we —
We feel no apprehensions for their fate —
Oh, no! and when their bleeding bodies, hurl'd
Adown the steepy crags, roll to our feet,
Why, then each mother, with a stoic's firmness,
Will calmly scoop her little one a grave —
The while some childless man looks kindly on,

Consoles her with a few unmeaning words,
And tells perhaps a prayer for their souls.

Burg. If it can lighten
Thy grief-oppressed heart to rail at me,
Because the greedy grave hath long since clos'd
On my last hope—rail on! Misfortune's rights
Still I hold sacred—and ne'er shall reflections,
However keen, stifle within my bosom
That sympathy which others' woes demand.—
In vain too would a parent's anxious care
Blight the young buds of my reviving hope.
Oft in the course of this protracted life,
When the last ray of earthly happiness
Seem'd in the gloom of black despair extinct,
Hath Heav'n a beam of consolation sent,
And turn'd my mourning into gratitude.

One of the Women (*looking stedfastly, like many of her companions, towards the camp*). See! see!—
what is it that so suddenly
Appears in motion on the topmost hills?—
Oh, for the eagle's wing to cleave the air!—
Oh, for the falcon's eye to pierce the distance!—
Like white lambs skipping down the mountain's slope
Lower and lower still doth it descend!

Ber. (*with alarm*). What is it that ye see?

Burg. The dawn of Hope.

One of the Women. Now—now more plainly may it be perceiv'd!

Ber. Say what?

Woman. There! there, on the declivity!—
Now they come singly! yes, it is—'tis they!

Ber. (*with extreme anxiety*). Who?

Woman. 'Tis the children!

All. Our children!

[*The* BURGOMASTER, *in a transport of gratitude, raises his clasped hands towards heaven.*]

Ber. O no! no! no! —
Your anxious love hath but deceiv'd itself,
And spread a fond delusion 'fore your sight.—
O, contradict me!

Woman. Yes, 'tis they indeed! —
The elder briskly run before, the younger
Follow with slower step.

Ber. But are they all there?

Woman. All.

Ber. Oh that these trembling limbs could mount the height,
I'd count them with a single glance!

Woman. All! all! and see — the foremost now have reach'd
The valley.

Ber. Tell me, do you see my husband?

Woman. We see him.

Ber. (*falling on her knees, and raising her hands*).
Heav'n be prais'd! he lives! they live!

Woman. He carries in his arms one of the children.

Ber. (*in alarm*). Dead—I suppose?

Woman. O no; the youngest.

Ber. And yet why carry him? he must be sick,
Or hurt perhaps?

Burg. May not so small a child
More likely be fatigued?

Woman. There, now he stops —
He beckons to the foremost boys, and marshals
The little troop—and takes himself the lead.
Now—now—they wave green boughs above their heads,
And like a grove the whole move onward now! —
What can this mean but peace? Yes! we're deliver'd!

All (*advancing to the front of the stage*). Blessed be Providence! we are deliver'd!

Children (*shouting at a distance.*) Victory o'er the Hussites! Victory!

[*A throng of joyful citizens come out at the gate, mingle with the women, share their transports, and impatiently await the arrival of the children.*]

[WOLF *rushes almost breathless upon the stage, carrying his two youngest children.* BERTHA *opens her arms to receive them.*]

Wolf. There, Bertha, I have brought them all safe back
To thy maternal arms, but the two youngest
Are weary: let them rest upon thy bosom.

Ber. (*clasping them in her arms*). My darlings!

[*The children come up, waving their branches with signs of joy and exultation. Their fathers and mothers respectively single out their own, and instantly a number of different groups are formed.*]

Wolf (*looking at them with deep emotion*). What a delicious scene!—Methinks from Heav'n
Well-pleas'd the Almighty Father doth survey it.

[*After a pause, he collects himself, and respectfully goes up to the* BURGOMASTER.]

Worshipful Sir, Procopius, the Bohemian,
In peace sends greeting to you, and assures
That, ere the sun renews his daily course,
His host shall leave our hills—no ransom wrung
From our necessity—our fields unravag'd—
Nay, not a hair shall suffer injury:
For—so he says—he's vanquish'd by our children.
Burg. Come to my heart, thou virtuous citizen!
And you—ye men of Naumburg—ne'er forget
What in the hour of deep distress ye ow'd
To this your humble townsman! From this day,
His children to the gen'ral State belong,
And be an ample recompence bestow'd
Upon himself for his good services.
Nor shall the public gratitude stop here,
But in the memory of posterity
His name shall be embalm'd.
Wolf. O! 'tis too much!—
For truly the success with which kind Heav'n
Hath pleas'd to crown the deed, is recompence
Sufficient for the risk: however flattering
The favours you propose, I need them not.
Contented with the fruits of industry,
To these my boys I've giv'n a second life;
But for my native town I have perform'd
A Patriot's duty only.—All the wealth
A monarch could bestow would not increase
My sum of happiness. Honours and fortune
Are precious boons, I grant: but far less sweet
Than the delight which fills his honest breast
Who from no sordid motive serves his country.

No hireling I!—nor for reward I've acted:
But if to me ye think aught owing by you,
Transfer it to my children: for myself,
I ask but love while living, and respect
When Death shall call me hence.

Burg. Mine be the care
To reconcile the feelings of thy heart,
So delicate and gen'rous, with our duty.

First Sen. (*advancing from the gate*). New and strange tidings from his lofty station
Our watch hath just announc'd. In haste, the foe
Breaks up his camp; the fires become extinct;
The tents have vanish'd, as autumnal leaves,
Swept from the parent stem by northern blasts.
The banners float; the troops are marching off;
Their last battalions only stud the hills,
Like ling'ring patches of December snows,
Dissolv'd by breath of Spring.

Wolf. Then hath he kept his word!

Burg. O memorable day, so gloriously
Mark'd by Heav'n's bountiful interposition,
Be thou distinguish'd in our calendar,
And kept with solemn rites by future ages!
Oft as the sun proclaimeth thy return,
Our troop of gladsome children to the hills
Shall hie them forth, and round the Monument
Rais'd where Procopius' colours proudly wav'd,
In sportive gambols mingle; while this spot,
Water'd with mothers' tears, no trenchant plough
Shall e'er disturb. Returning home at eve,
The joyous infant band, with waving boughs,

Shall raise the exulting shout of *Victory!—*
Victory o'er the Hussites!—Victory!—
That thus the mem'ry of our stern alarms
And great deliv'rance be transmitted down
From sire to son, till Time's remotest date.

CHORUS.

'Gainst a host of fierce invaders
We sent forth our infant bands,
Nought but innocence to shield them
From the savage warriors' hands.
Though fond mothers, broken-hearted,
Each lov'd child as lost deplor'd,
And as victims they departed,
Yet as victors they're restor'd.

[*The music changes to a march, on which the people begin to move. The children, waving their boughs, open the procession: the parents follow; and last of all come the* BURGOMASTER *and Senators. While they are passing through the gate, the curtain falls.*]

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